

**Report of the Task Force on General Education Issues
March 2, 2011**

BACKGROUND

The Task Force on General Education Issues was charged by the Faculty Senate Executive Committee to make recommendations about our General Education policies for native and transfer students in light of the changes in General Education and Transfer policies enacted by the Board of Trustees in 2009/2010. As explained in the letter to the faculty of October 7, 2010 from the Chair of the Faculty Senate, the transitional plan put forward by Provost Mary Ann Swain on June 24, 2010 was meant to be a temporary plan for the 2010/2011 academic year.

SUMMARY OF OUR POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS (CY) (RECOM) to be

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transfer students until Fall 2009. In December 2008, the Provost indicated that the policy could not be implemented for Fall 2009 because of resource issues, and the Provost issued a new temporary policy in June 2010 fnot

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ACTIVITIES OF THE GENERAL EDUCATION TASK FORCE

of our student body. Approximately 60% of transfer students come from SUNY institutions. Arranging appropriate advising and articulation agreements is more feasible for these students than for the 40% who come from other institutions. On average 44% of transfer students enter with sufficient credits to be considered juniors or seniors, 39% sophomores, and 16% freshmen. Meeting additional general education requirements is easier for students entering at an earlier point in their programs. The overall average first semester GPA for new freshmen and new transfer students is not dramatically different but this differs by school and year. Overall average GPAs at time of graduation for transfer students do not differ greatly from the overall averages, although they are lower for Harpur and Watson students. (Source: OIR reports listed in the resources section)

WHY DOES THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE REQUIREMENT CREATE SUCH A BIG PROBLEM?

Meeting the third-level foreign language requirement can be a problem for several reasons. The first reason relates to scheduling difficulties. The second reason relates to resources.

If a student lacks background in foreign languages, it may take as many as three courses to fulfill the requirement. This is different from other General Education requirements which can be met with a single course. Introductory level foreign language courses typically meet four days a week for five hours of contact time. This makes them difficult to fit into the schedule of transfer students who may be locked into various departmental required courses. Furthermore, few language tracks at Binghamton offer level 1, 2 and 3 courses each semester. Perceived or actual time-to-degree problems resulting from this requirement may impact our ability to attract the best transfer students.

Some transfer students will have fulfilled the third-level foreign language requirement in high school or by taking courses at their transfer institution. An analysis of a sample of transfer student transcripts from 2006/2007 indicates that about 40% of students may fall into this category. Of the remaining students, about half had 85 on a foreign language regents, thus meeting the SUNY foreign language requirement. The other half would not have fulfilled the State requirement, and therefore would have taken a foreign language course (unless a Watson Engineering student). Implementation of a third-level foreign language requirement for these students means that the ones with the SUNY foreign language requirement completed would have to take at least two more foreign language courses and the other students might need three courses.

When one combines these facts with the scheduling issues noted above, it appears that implementation of a third semester foreign language requirement could result in additional time to degree for unprepared transfers. It seems unlikely that this problem can be fully resolved through better advising, which is the approach that has been taken since 2002 with little effect. It is also noted that third-level foreign language courses are not necessarily available at all feeder institutions even if transfer students knew they were coming to Binghamton and wanted to meet our foreign language requirement in advance.

Furthermore, the resource implications can be estimated from the sample study. Typically about 1,200 transfer students come here each year. Forty percent of the students would have met our third-level (freshman) foreign language requirement. Thirty percent of the students would have needed to take a foreign language course to SUNY requirements, so we are already meeting that need. These students and the other 30% who met the SUNY requirement would need to take one or two additional foreign language courses depending on individual background and circumstances. The number of transfer students falling in this category are about 700 students per year. The actual impact would be lower because some of these students are in Watson Engineering, Watson Computer Science or Nursing. Our estimate is that 500 students per year would need to take additional foreign language courses (over and above what is currently required). This would require more sections of second and third semester foreign language courses.

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Supporting Documents, available online:

- Letter to Faculty October 7, 2010 - <http://www.binghamton.edu/general-education/TF-letter-to-faculty-100710.doc>
- Memorandum from Mary Ann Swain June 24, 2010 - <http://www.binghamton.edu/general-education/TF-memo-swain-062410.doc>
- Board of Trustees resolution on Transfers – <http://www.binghamton.edu/general-education/TF-bot-resolution-trfr-111709.doc>